



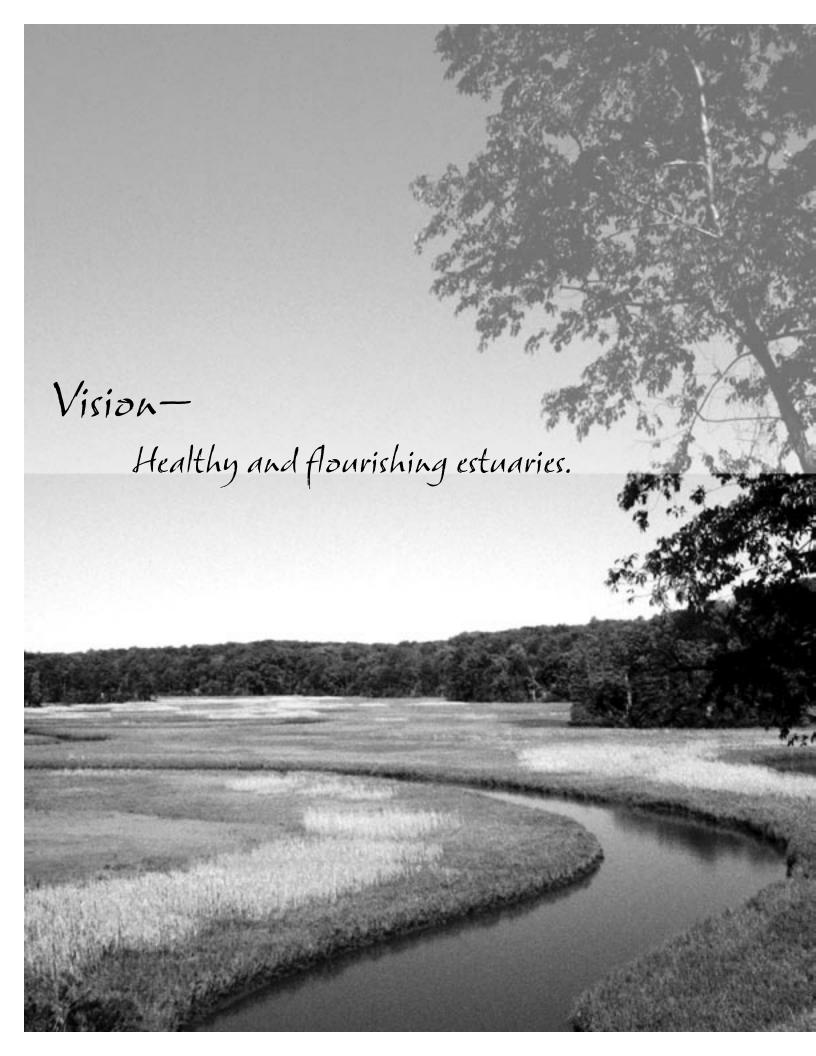


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For more information about the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, please visit our **web site: www.nerrs.noaa.gov**





Strategic Plan 2003 - 2008

The National Estuarine Research
Reserve System is a protected areas
program created by the Coastal Zone
Management Act, of 1972, to provide
a system of representative estuarine
ecosystem areas suitable for long-term
research, education, and stewardship.
More than one million acres of
estuarine lands and waters are currently
included within the 26 federally
designated reserves.

Administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,

the reserve system is a federal-state partnership. NOAA and coastal state partners collaborate to set common priorities and to develop system-wide programs. Additionally, NOAA provides support for state partners and national cohesion. State partners carry out locally relevant and nationally significant programs at individual reserves and provide day-to-day management of resources and programs.

This Strategic Plan provides the vision, mission, goals, and objectives that will guide the National Estuarine Research Reserves over the next five years. Development of this document was a collaborative process involving partners at the state and federal levels. It incorporates feedback from reserve staff on the external forces affecting site management, including environmental,

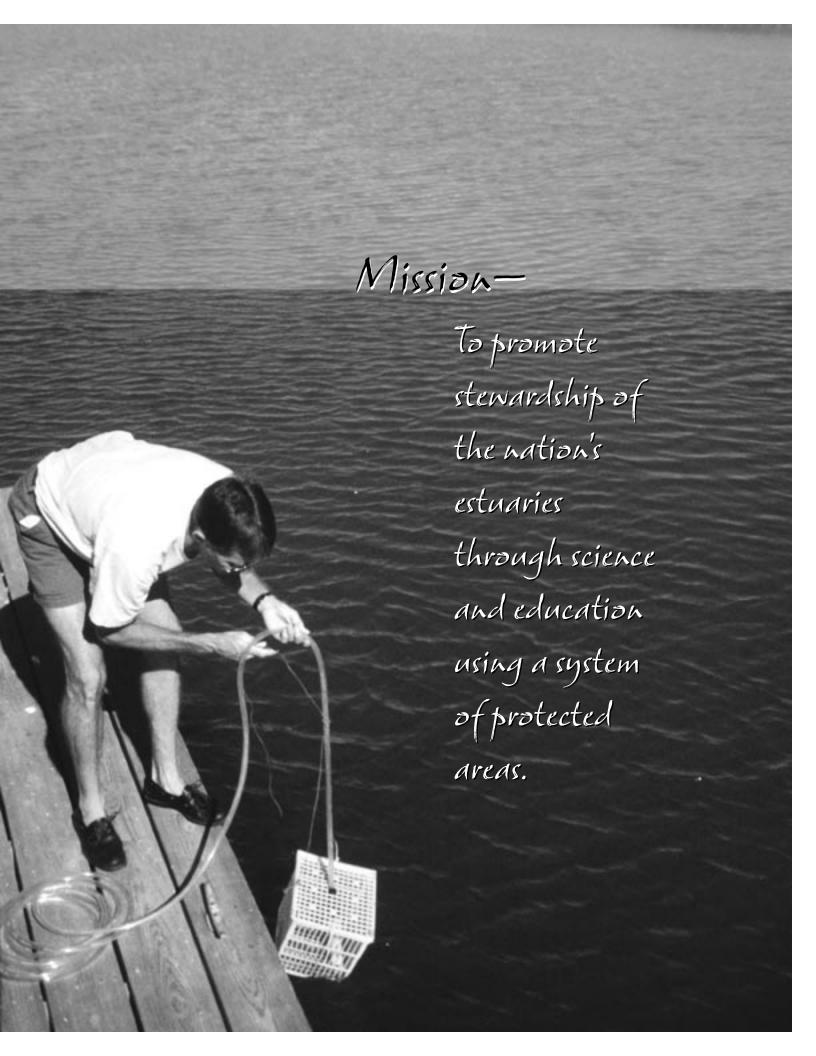


programmatic, administrative, and societal factors. These considerations formed the basis for each goal and the corresponding objectives.

The document also reflects the estuarine reserves decision to foster greater integration among science, education, and management. The primary system-wide reserve programs focus on environmental monitoring, coastal training, and fellowships for graduate students. These national programs and the numerous local initiatives have been traditionally segmented into research and education functions. The reserve system has taken steps to unite these functions for improved management of coastal areas. This effort is reflected in the overall structure of the Strategic Plan.

Several documents are intended to complement the Strategic Plan. A threeyear Action Plan has been developed and will be revised annually to provide key actions to accomplish the strategic goals and objectives. In addition, a system of performance measures is being designed to track progress toward the achievement of the strategic goals and objectives. Together, these documents will guide the future direction of the reserve system and measure progress towards key strategic goals.





Guiding Principles

Strong partnerships between NOAA, reserve agencies and universities, and other local partners are key to the success of the reserve system.

The reserve system integrates science, education, and stewardship to maximize the benefits to coastal management and produce tangible results.

The reserve system implements system-wide initiatives to maximize local, regional, and national benefits.

Reserves serve to demonstrate and facilitate the development of sound science and best prac-



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tices for improved local and regional coastal resource management.

Reserves engage local communities and citizens to improve stewardship of coastal areas.



Strategic Goals 2003 - 2008

- 1. Improve coastal decision making by generating and transferring knowledge about coastal ecosystems.
- 2. Enhance and expand the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.
- 3. Increase awareness, use, and support of the reserve system and its estuarine science, education, and stewardship programs.



GOAL 1:

Improve coastal decision making by generating and transferring knowledge about coastal ecosystems.

Objectives

- 1. Increase ecological understanding of estuaries through research and monitoring.
- 2. Increase understanding about the relationships among estuaries and human activities, social issues, values, and behaviors through research and monitoring.
- 3. Enhance the transfer of knowledge, information, and skills to coastal decision makers for improved coastal stewardship.
- 4. Provide education programs for students, teachers, and the public for increased literacy about estuaries.

GOAL 2: Enhance and expand the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

Objectives

- 1. Maintain and enhance the integrity of reserve habitats through stewardship and restoration.
- 2. Enhance the long-term integrity and diversity of reserve habitats by implementing land acquisition plans.
- 3. Ensure reserves have facilities to meet systemwide goals and programmatic needs.
- 4. Identify and designate new reserves consistent with system-wide policy.



GOAL 3: Increase awareness, use, and support of the reserve system and its estuarine science, education, and stewardship programs.



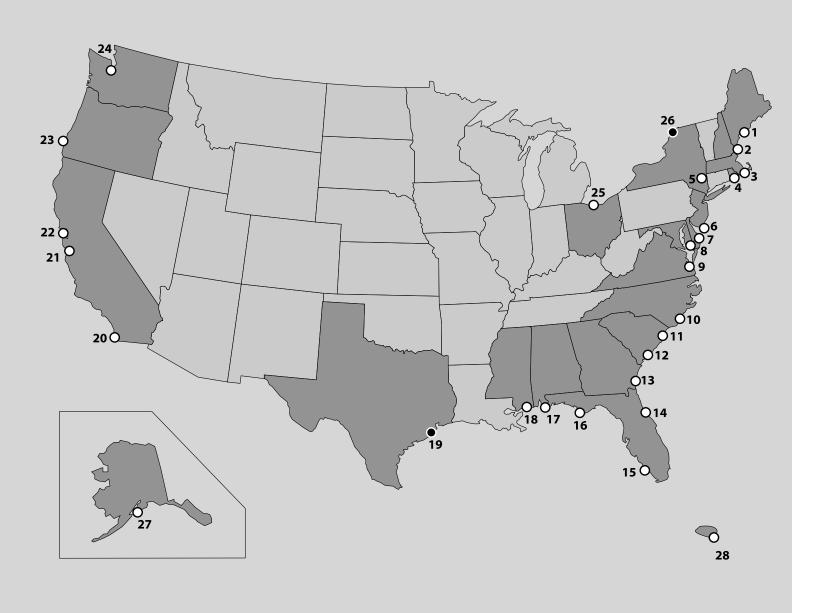
- 1. Enhance the system's ability to promote reserve products, services, and opportunities.
- 2. Increase visibility and credibility of the estuarine reserves within key professional communities.
- 3. Enhance outreach and partnership activities for increased governmental and community support.



National Estuarine Research Reserves



- 1. Wells Reserve, Maine
- 2. Great Bay Reserve, New Hampshire
- 3. Waquoit Bay Reserve, Massachusetts
- 4. Narragansett Bay Reserve, Rhode Island
- 5. Hudson River Reserve, New York
- 6. Jacques Cousteau Reserve, New Jersey
- 7. Delaware Reserve
- 8. Chesapeake Bay Reserve, Maryland
- 9. Chesapeake Bay Reserve, Virginia



A Network of 26 Protected Areas

- 10. North Carolina Reserve
- 11. North Inlet-Winyah Bay Reserve, South Carolina
- 12. ACE Basin Reserve, South Carolina
- 13. Sapelo Island, Georgia
- 14. Guana Tolomato Matanzas Reserve, Florida
- 15. Rookery Bay Reserve, Florida
- 16. Apalachicola Reserve, Florida
- 17. Weeks Bay Reserve, Alabama
- 18. Grand Bay Reserve, Mississippi

- 19. Proposed Reserve—Texas
- 20. Tijuana River Reserve, California
- 21. Elkhorn Slough Reserve, California
- 22. San Francisco, California
- 23. South Slough Reserve, Oregon
- 24. Padilla Bay Reserve, Washington
- 25. Old Woman Creek, Ohio
- 26. Proposed Reserve—St. Lawrence River
- 27. Kachemak Bay Reserve, Alaska
- 28. Jobos Bay Reserve, Puerto Rico